25 Oct 1974

228 (Nelson)

22225?

My letter had come on Trafalgar day

Nov Oct '25

Calvary Nursing Home
Sudbury Hill
Harrow on the Hill
Middlesex

Oct 22(?) 1974

René annwyl

Many thanks for yr letter that did reach me yesterday afternoon so it did come on ~~Tuesday~~ the day intended, the hundred & sixty-ninth October since ... they closed like a forest ... in ~~fifteen~~ fathom water ... in the worsening weather ... the shoals of Trafalgar on ~~this~~ the lee quarter' for however it goes ~~in that~~ the account — I ~~know~~ know I've quoted the passage somewhere but can't find it where.

It's quite awful how one's memory lets one down. I did not know that yr Robin's birthday was on Trafalgar Day I sent him ~~my~~ birthday greetings I write this brief note only to thank you for letter — it crossed a long meander of mine to you enclosing a ~~an~~ printed extract written by dear Louis Bonnerot ~~that~~ Eric his widow Luce gave to me when she came to visit me last week, but it evidently had not reached you when you wrote about it except it will have arrived at Shangaying by now.

Seeing we are on the subject of Trafalgar I can't resist a matter (Mick Richey would laugh at this because on this & time I've mentioned it)

You know the account says that when Nelson was hit by a musket shot ~~from~~ fired from the mainstop platform, ~~the~~ or

Must send thanks.. Do hope my other letter with Bonnerot thing & it reached you

Love to Joan & Ros.

Dai.

anyway from the lower mast-head where cross timbers formed a 'fire-bay' for marksmen to pick off the targets from their high perches but at mortally close range, for the French ship from which the 'death-shot' was (unless I've got that wrong too).

for, unless I've got that wrong too, there was between the Victory and the French ship little leeway

But that's not what puzzles me. Nelson was pacing the Quarter-deck when he fell, but a few moments before one of his officers had fallen & the account says that the actual spot was scattered with fragments of timber from the 'fore-brace bitts' i.e. the heavy baulk of timber to which were belayed the braces (of cordage) of the foremast, or rather the yards of the fore mast to which the foremast sails were bent. 'Bitt or bitts could be used nautically of other contrivances, but it is obvious in this context from Nelson on the quarter-deck & the scattered fragments of the 'fore-brace bitts' that what had been hit was one of both the heavy uprights that supported, & were part of, a heavy cross timber to which was belayed the cordage of the fore yards & so determined the manipulation of the sails of that fore-mast. 'Generally shocking, rightly or wrongly' I say smiling to myself. Remember 'braces' go aft, 'stays' go forward & shrouds go from beam to beam or rather from mast to outboard beyond top-strake, and made fast to heavy-sheaved blocks & dead eyes to Wale above where their Bulwarks 'tumble home' — I fancy her shrouds are set very slightly to aft of the mast they supported but this is purely from memory & may need be corrected.

Bitts

in modern US ships Quarter-deck derives from a time when a 'Half-Deck' extended over the length of the vessel from the stern to mid-ships

what a perfect term to explain

I've still not come to the question that no doubt has a perfectly simple answer. If the timber called the 'fore-brace bits' was on the quarter-deck, that is far to the stern of the great vessel, from all time the place of command and helm & admiralty part, in medieval vessels, of the After Castle, are we to suppose that the Cordage of the Fore-mast yards run the whole, or a large part of the whole length of the Victory, that her sheets their belaying bitts that far aft?

Wrong

If so, where the braces of the main mast yards belayed - or more difficult still, where the sheets of the mizzen-mast yards, or braces being part of the "running rigging", run aft, what 'brace bitts' were they belayed?

Ludicrous question of course and foolish for the answer is, without any doubt, quite simple. But those 'fore-brace bitts' that got a nasty one (presumably a common shot) shortly before a discharge of a mere musket laid 'that great Admiral' low on the Quarter deck of the 'leading vessel of the Weather column' still seems odd.

'I-el thank you Capt Harvey to keep yr place in line' Do you remember how we enjoyed that.

A bit back quite by chance (I think in the Marines Mirror that I take in that an analysis of the ship's Company in the Victory shows that of nearly a thousand men the vast majority were English, a number of Scots, about 30 to 40 Irish and but some 18 Welshmen - as far as I can recall.

(4)

Yes, Agenda did advertise the Ken Mann.
in that same issue that has in it a fragment
of a draft of it — The issue with the Drystan
as Esyllt water-colour reproduced on the cover in colors.
But it just annoys that they hope to
print the whole 'poem' if it is finished,
in 'later this year' you'll find the
Editor note on page 11 of that issue.
But I have told William C. that
it can't possibly be 'finished'
within the year. He quite understands
that. He has already received some
orders for it, but says that's O.K.
& the delay is perfectly understood.
My trouble is that it the Ken Mann
~~is taking on a good different shape~~
is very differently gesceapenne to
the thing I made in the '40s &
indeed for what I thought it would be
in this '74 attempt — indeed I'm
beginning to wonder if I can manage
what I wanted — but I must make
the attempt somehow.
I agree wholly with a little Moses
in the wattle Basawd in ~~my~~ form's ship shape'
it lifts up a ~~body~~ bodily image
strange how one finds delight in some
single ~~so~~ simple few words that
define & hold up a visible & evocative
thing.
In the Welsh ~~Luke~~ Lucan narrative
of the Birth where the gosel says
et pannis eum involvit et reclinavit
eum in praesepio, ~~and~~ the ~~recliuavit~~
last few words are translated
y dyn bach yn y preseb — ~~and~~
the little man in the crib — I have
not here a Welsh version & can
remember only the dyn bach yn a preseb
which is comic & my unusual — for
you'd have thought Baban would
have been used.
Oh Lord I had more to say but
the kind person who takes my letters
to the post is literally waiting for me
to put this in a envelope ready,
with love dear René
Dai.